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AN
ESSAY,
ON
ECCLESIASTICAL
ESTABLISHMENTS
IN
RELIGION:

SHewing THEIR HURTFUL TENDENCY; AND THAT THEY CANNOT
BE DEFENDED, EITHER ON PRINCIPLES OF
REASON OR SCRIPTURE.

TO WHICH ARE ANNEXED,
TWO DISCOURSES.
BY A PROTESTANT DISSENTER.

GEN. XLIX. 5, 6, 7. *Simeon and Levi are brethren : instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret ; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united ; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce ; and their wrath, for it was cruel ; I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.*

JOHN XVIII. 36. *Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews : but now is my kingdom not from hence.*

MONTROSE:
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TO
PROTESTANT DISSENTERS

OF EVERY DENOMINATION ;

WHO ACKNOWLEDGE THE SCRIPTURES AS THE ONLY

RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE ;

AND VALUE THE TRUE PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY :

THE FOLLOWING ESSAY IS RESPECTFULLY

INSCRIBED, BY

THEIR FRIEND AND FELLOW-DISSENTER,

WILLIAM CHRISTIE.

MONTROSE 9th. October 1791.

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TO THE
PROFESSOR OF
MATHS

OF THE
SCHOOL OF
MATHS

OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

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A N
E S S A Y

O N

ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENTS. &c.

REVEALED Religion is the greatest and most inestimable blessing ever conferred on human nature. Where its principles are thoroughly understood, imbibed, and received into the heart, it has a natural tendency to elevate and humanize the mind; and becomes the parent of every great, manly, and virtuous deed. It preaches peace on earth, Love, universal love, and good-will towards all men. It sets before us the perfect model of Jesus of Nazareth, in whose amiable life and manners, we see virtue descend from heaven as it were, and become visible to mortal eyes; and by its precepts as well as the example of its great author it teaches us to pray for, to forgive, and even to bless our most bitter and unrelenting foes. How comes it to pass then, that a Religion so philanthropic, so mild and humane, should have become the spring of so many dire evils:—should have occasioned so much rancour, malice, contention and ill-will:—should have filled the world with war, bloodshed, persecution and devastation?

———*Tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ?*

A

There is an unhappy propensity in human nature I will grant, to vitiate and debase every thing that comes from God ; and to mix the tares of its own infirmity with the heavenly feed.† But this infirmity, this weakness, this depravity, call it by what name you please, does not appear to me to be the sole or even the chief cause of that horrid train of evils, that have arisen in the world on account of a benevolent religion.

I will say without hesitation what appears to me to be the principal cause : tho' in doing so I must necessarily give offence to a numerous and powerful body of men ; who have no small sway over the passions and prejudices of a great part of mankind. But a regard to sacred truth is with me superior to every other consideration ; and I am ready to accompany her steps, even tho' in following her I should be led to the brink of a precipice. The cause then, the chief, the principal cause of these evils, I apprehend to be, the Union of the church with the State, or as some call it the *Alliance* betwixt church and State ; in other words popular and prevailing sects of Religion established, unduly favoured, and upheld by the civil power, with a public ministry appointed by Government ; and paid out of the common wealth or common property of the state.

It is the supposed necessity of these establishments, that has occasioned all the persecution and religious wars that have prevailed among Protestants, if not Papists also. But as there is some difference in the way of reasoning of Papists from that of Protestants with regard to this subject, it may be proper here briefly to state that difference.

† Math. xiii 27.

The infallibility of the Pope, or the church represented by the Clergy with the Pope at their head, is a well known tenet of the Roman Catholics. There is some degree of consistency therefore in *their* contending for establishments. As the decisions of the church are in their opinion infallible, and contain only pure truth without any mixture of error: and as truth,—religious truth, is the greatest blessing that can be conferred on mankind, it appears right to them, that the magistrate should take care of it, and compel his subjects whether they will or not, to accept of so precious a gift. At least it fully justifies the civil power in their apprehension, to give a preference to that sect where truth is found, by a legal establishment with proper emoluments. And were the claim of infallibility generally allowed, I own it would be a plausible argument in favour of establishments; if not persecution also.

But Protestants have long ago renounced this principle. They denied it at the reformation, and LUTHER, CALVIN, CRANMER, and KNOX, as well as SERVETUS and SOCINUS, refused to acknowledge the authority of the Pope and to submit to the decisions of the Council of Trent. Now, if any man, or body of men, think differently from Luther Calvin &c. have not the former as good a right to protest against their decisions, as the latter had to protest against the Pope or the Council of Trent. The utmost that any Protestant is authorized to say in favour of his religious tenets is, that to him they appear clear and certain; but he dares not claim or assume infallibility. Of consequence he has no right to call upon the Magistrate, and insist upon him to establish *his* doctrines and grant his sect a preference rather than any other. If one sect imagines it has a right to a pre-

ference ; another, will think the same. For every sect whether small or great, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, concludes it is in the right : and if the parties are nearly equal a struggle and probably a civil war will ensue. They rail at one another in discourse, from the pulpit, and from the press, till they become exasperated, and then betake themselves to arms. The *ultima ratio regum*, the last reason of kings, and of contending sects decides the business. Force, brutal force. Cannon and Musquetry are discharged. The fields are dyed with christian blood ; and the professed disciples of Jesus plunge swords and daggers into one another's bowels ! Each contending for the honour of being the church *as by Law established*. Merciful Lord ! if from that triumphant glory to which thou art exalted at the right hand of the Father, thou lookest down upon a scene so dismal, as thou didst upon Stephen and Saul, wilt thou acknowledge *such furies* to be thy disciples ? Didst thou ever set them the example of such deeds ? Didst thou not rebuke thy sanguine forward servant Peter, for using his sword even in thy own defence ; and tell him, that *all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword* ? † Didst thou not heal the ear of him that came to apprehend thee ? Didst thou not suffer thyself to be made a prisoner, to be bound, to be tried, unjustly condemned and crucified : when by a single exertion of the Father's power residing in thee, thou couldst have prostrated and crushed all thy enemies at once ?

That the reader may not think I have been describing a visionary scene that was never realized, I will produce testimonies from history. Without

† MATH. XXVI. 52.

going abroad to foreign nations, or groping in remote antiquity, the transactions of our own country will supply sufficient examples. What was one principle cause of the civil war betwixt Charles the first and the long parliament in the last century?

What but the domineering rage of religious sects blown up by their respective priests, contending for the mastery and the power of oppressing one another. Charles I grant made many invasions upon the civil rights of his subjects, which caused great ferments and discontents, and called loudly for redress. But these discontents would probably never have arisen to that alarming height, or terminated so fatally as they did; if that misguided priest-ridden prince, had not thrown himself into the arms of Bishops and other ecclesiastics of the church established by law, and by their advice oppressed and tormented his dissenting subjects in England; and attempted to introduce Episcopacy in Scotland.

The Scotch Presbyterians with the English Dissenters, it is well known were his most inveterate enemies; and the principal means of turning the scale of war against him. Now it is evident, that if there had been no establishment, this civil war so far as Religion was concerned in it could not have happened. Without an Establishment, without court Bishops and flattering Priests, Charles would have never thought of meddling with religious sects in England, or yet with the Presbyterians in Scotland; and of consequence would have been relieved from the most formidable of all his enemies.

On the other hand, irritated by oppression, inflamed with the lust of power, and the hope of an establishment, the Presbyterians framed the solemn league and covenant; and bound themselves by a sacred oath to extirpate all religions but their

own. They now became as bad in Theory as the Episcopalians, tho' a regard to truth obliges me to say, that in the exercise of their power they were rather milder than the former had been. When the times turned, and Charles the second was restored, the former acts of oppression were renewed. Great severities were used against Dissenters in England, Episcopacy was established in Scotland : and the Presbyterians were miserably harrassed and persecuted. This hard treatment roused them into frequent rebellions, in which many perished by the sword as well as by the executioner.

Now here we have in a short period of British history, not exceeding fifty or sixty years, a specimen of the complicated evils arising from an alliance betwixt church and state ; or a Religion by law established. Nothing of this kind could have happened, if Protestants had adopted a right plan at the reformation. If after asserting, as they did, the right of private Judgement they had been consistent, they should never have composed articles of Religion, or connected the state and the church together. But should have encouraged and protected equally, good ministers and moral citizens of every denomination ; without selecting any particular sect or party, gratifying it by benefices and livings, and thereby exciting the envy and hatred of all the other sects.— That the plan I have been recommending is not chimerical but real, is proved from the example of America. Glorious Country ! Where Religion, (at least as much of it as is to be found in Europe), Liberty, and equal laws, exist and reign. The Hydra of an establishment the Americans have determined never to admit amongst them. All sects and parties live harmoniously together.

The Catholic, the Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Independent, Quaker, and Unitarian are good friends and good citizens. And as no sect is preferred to another, the foundation of religious rancour, strife, and contention is taken away.

But it may be said the evils I have been mentioning as arising from establishments were only temporary ones ; and nothing of the like kind has occurred since the Revolution. Parties have no doubt been milder since the Revolution : but the evils arising from establishments have been neither small, nor few. They have encouraged an indolent, careless, worldly-minded Clergy. The rich benefices in England, particularly the Deaneries and Bishopricks, have promoted the purposes of corruption, made the clergy and many of the Laity dependent upon the Court ; and are a heavy burden upon a nation loaded with taxes to support. It is only a few years ago since Dissenters were relieved from a subscription to the doctrinal articles of the church of England, and still a subscription to the scriptures is demanded ; which the Magistrate considered in his civil capacity, has no more right to require than a subscription to the Alkoran.†

† The Act of Parliament alluded to requires from every Dissenting teacher, a declaration to the following effect, viz. that " he believes in the Divine Revelations contained in the old and new Testament." I frankly declare, that I would rather endure Persecution, than make this declaration to any Magistrate considered in his civil capacity ; because it would in my judgement infer a breach of the allegiance I owe to Christ, the only *Shepherd and Bishop of Souls* ; and be equivalent to the receiving from the Magistrate a license to preach his Gospel. The Divine Revelations contained in the old and new Testament, were never committed by God, or Christ, to the care of any King, Parliament, or civil governor whatever. They are a common inestimable legacy bequeathed to all believers without exception ; and the Magistrate *as such*, whether supreme or subordinate, has no more concern with them in the view I have mentioned, than he has with the Alkoran of Mohammed. But tho' I would not make the declaration abovementioned before any civil Judge or Court, I would do it if required, to the meanest man or woman of that little flock, who join with me in the common worship of God our heavenly Father, in the name of his Son Jesus the Messiah.

The test and corporation acts are a shameful stigma left upon Dissenters; whereby they are deprived of the rights of citizens and freemen. Eternal squabbles arise between the clergy and their parishioners about the payment of tythes, and in some places no man is more hated than the parish priest. Can men so circumstanced be expected to do good; or to promote the salvation of souls? Can a courtly, ambitious, a loose, disorderly clergy, have much tendency to improve the minds of the people or amend their manners? Alas! the Profligacy and licentiousness of the English populace shew that they have not. The conscientious people called Quakers, have often been brought to no little trouble by these overbearing priests, and have suffered even to bonds and imprisonment. By these priests *Elwall* was brought to trial tho' acquitted by his Jury and Judge; and the late pious and worthy Dr. *Doddridge* not sixty years ago, was prosecuted, for setting up an Academy at Northampton to teach youth learning and religion. Other anecdotes of a like nature might be produced; but I have said enough to prove that the English Establishment is a real loss to the country.

Fewer objections lie against the Establishment in Scotland. The same unscriptural and antichristian doctrines indeed prevail: but I speak here only of the external figure and constitution of the church. The Scotch Establishment has the appearance of great simplicity in its structure. It knows nothing of Archbishops, Diocesan Bishops, Archdeacons, Deans &c. It acknowledges no festivals or days of Saints. It demands no Test or Corporation acts; and scorns to prostitute the Lord's Supper as a Qualification for a civil office. It despises the constant repetition of a liturgy, and

allows its ministers the exercise of their talents and abilities in free prayer. The Salaries of its Pastors are moderate and nearly equal ; and as little as a man can well have, who is deprived of the opportunity of following a secular calling. I am happy to be able to say any thing in praise of a church of which I was once a member, where I have still some friends, and several respectable acquaintances. It would give me pleasure to be able to say still more in favour of the ecclesiastical constitution of my own country But, *Amicus Plato, Amicus Socrates, sed magis Amicus Veritas*. Admitting that the articles of the church of Scotland were pure, which they are not, but directly contrary to the scriptures, this circumstance however desirable it might be in itself, would not vindicate her as an establishment. An establishment is wedded to the powers of this world, and therefore cannot be the spouse of Christ. Church and State, tho' re-echoed by a thousand Burkes, will never do upon the plan of Christianity. Were Unitarianism itself to be established it would soon become corrupted. Whenever any particular church is connected with the state, that state assumes a power over its ministers and members, which destroys its christian character. The ministers are, and must be from the nature of an establishment, thrust upon the people by royal or private presentations, without their consent.—Where the church takes a bribe from the state, the state will repay itself by assuming an authority over the church. Violent settlements will consequently take place, and on some occasions it will be necessary to use soldiers. Have we not seen many instances of this kind in the church of Scotland ; and have not congregations been agitated split and divided ? Does not a royal commis-

sioner in solemn pomp, attended by a band of military, walk before the ministers of the church of Scotland when they meet in their General Assembly? Does not the same Commissioner prorogue them, and appoint their future meetings: not obscurely intimating thereby, in my apprehension, that the King is the head of the church. And of a church by law established, where monarchy prevails, he is the natural and proper head. But all this is inconsistent with the reason of things, and with the constitution of that church established by our only Lord and Master, *the man Christ Jesus*.

And this brings me to a ground of argument that I have not yet touched upon.—*Religious Establishments are inconsistent with the reason of things, and with the principles of true Christianity.*

First. *They are inconsistent with the Reason of things.* Religion, or the worship and service of the Deity, was binding on man before civil Government was formed: and would be still binding were every civil Government at an end. When men became members of large societies or general Governments, they brought their private Religion along with them, and had a title to enjoy the profession of it peaceably and openly: provided they did not disturb or molest others in the enjoyment of the same right. Consequently the Government whether monarchical, democratical, or mixed, had no right to make any law by which the private religion of a few, or even a single individual of its subjects, should be hurt or injuriously affected. But every established religion must hurt or injuriously affect Dissenters, in one or other of the different classes and departments of life. No religious establishment constructed

by civil power, that is the power of Government, can be supported without a revenue ; which revenue can only be raised by tythes, or some mode of taxation. Now tythes, or teinds as they are called in Scotland, are either the property of the Landholder or of the State.† If they are the property of the Landholder, it is unjust that they should be exacted from him without his free consent : and if they belong to the state it is injurious to every class of Dissenters, that what is the common property of the state or commonwealth, and consequently in part their property, should be applied to the support of any particular sect however numerous ; and not to the interests of society at large : more especially if that state be encumbered with a heavy national debt. But if establishments are supported by taxation, the notorious injustice done to Dissenters becomes still more evident. The Dissenter is deprived, I may say robbed of his property, and obliged to pay something in return for which he receives nothing, yea worse than nothing. In return for civil taxes a man receives protection ; but what does the Dissenter re-

† I presume the Clergy have more sense than to say, that they have a right to the tythes, or such a proportion of them as the Law allows, by inheritance from the church of Rome apart from the will of the state. If they should say so, they will prove themselves the heirs of Antichrist with a witness. And if they found their claim upon the Law, or the will of the state, what the state has given the state may take away. But they will say perhaps, that the constitution of the church of Scotland and the right of the Clergy to a proportion of the tythes, is secured by the articles of the Union. In reply to this, I tell them, that Reason and the New Testament are older, and of greater authority, than the Scotch Parliament, the articles of Union, or the Commissioners who appointed them. And that if any part of these articles are found to be partial, unreasonable, or unscriptural, they must be subject to the revial of the British Parliament. What right had the English and Scotch Parliaments at the time of the Union to bind all Posterity, and assume a power over unborn generations ? To talk of immortal and unchangeable constitutions in this state of frailty and mutability, is therefore ridiculous ! See *Paine's Rights of man*.

ceive for taxes paid on a religious account ? Some may say the liberty of attending the established church if he inclines. But what if the church will not receive him on account of his difference of sentiment : or what if he cannot in conscience attend ? Is it not evident that he is obliged to give away his money in this case without an equivalent : obliged either to support those who eject him and cast him out : or constrained to violate his conscience and to be instrumental in promoting and advancing a system that his heart disavows, perhaps contemns and abhors ? To say therefore that the church doors are open to Dissenters, and that they may come if they please, is a profane and wanton insult : and by no means an adequate reply to the irresistible force of this argument.

Every man, every christian, every protestant, has a natural, unalienable, and indefeasible right to chuse his own religion, and his own minister : to pay him more or less as he inclines, to settle with him by free voluntary gift, or by fair and equitable compact. And mean-spirited and ignoble is that religious instructor, who would wish to exact even from one of his own flock, more than he inclines to give, or can conveniently spare. But those who make use of arbitrary laws to extort money from the members of separate and opposite communions, are little better than public plunderers. Religious establishments therefore, as they cannot be supported without such acts of injustice, are inconsistent with the reason of things, the rights of man, and the principles of true and equal liberty. What occasion have we for established ministers, more than established Physicians, Lawyers, established Masons, Carpenters, Barbers and Shoemakers. Yea, there is even less necessity for established teachers of Religion, than any of the professions

and Trades above mentioned. For every man cannot be his own Physician, his own Lawyer, Carpenter &c. But every man who has common sense, a sound understanding, a pious inclination, and has read the Bible and a few religious books, is competent to chuse his own religion and his own minister. || Nor would he find much difficulty in procuring a minister more than a Physician, tho' there were no established ones.

It may be said the Interests of Religion would suffer without an established Clergy. But this is a mistake, easily confuted from the history of the first ages of the church. Religion was unprotected, uncountenanced, yea often persecuted by the civil power for three centuries after Christ. But did it ever flourish more than in these ages, when eminent ministers, holy martyrs, and excellent private Christians abounded; with whom few in modern establishments I believe can be compared. What should hinder religion from thriving in our times without an establishment, as well as it did in these early ages. Is not God, the everlasting God, our God as well

|| As for persons of an opposite cast, viz. the senseless prophane &c. it would be hardly worth while to erect an establishment for them. And if they had an inclination to improve or amend, they might find an opportunity, by attending any of the churches of the different religious sects that would exist, in case of no establishment. But persons of a confirmed licentious turn of mind, I apprehend, would not improve much by any ministry whatever. With respect to them the coercive force of civil Government would be the best restraint; and the *red* coats would perform more than the *black* coats. In regard to poor ignorant people, fatherless children &c. who had no means of improvement; it would be incumbent on the pious and well disposed of all Communities to form voluntary associations for their instruction. But if this method should be found precarious and inadequate for the purpose, I would in this case *only* approve of the interference of civil Government. Let public schools be erected in different parts of the Country, and a plain Catechism composed, free of all controversy, containing nothing in it but the elementary principles of morals and religion. Let proper masters with reasonable salaries be appointed for these schools; and after the pupils were sufficiently instructed, let it be left to their own decision, to make choice of their own mode of worship, among all the different sects of Christianity.

as theirs? Is not the Gospel the same as it was at first, equally efficacious through the divine power, to convert the sinner, and to confirm, instruct, enlighten, and make the man of God perfect in all good works? Do we not stand on higher ground than the ancients did? Have not the evidences of Christianity been strengthened by the fulfillment of prophecy; and the judicious defences of it published by many able writers? In consequence of the invention of printing knowledge has been diffused, and books multiplied and rendered cheap: so that it is an easier task now for a mere English scholar, a private Christian, to acquire knowledge of the most excellent kind, than it was for an eminent and learned divine in early ages.

What then has the religious world to fear from the abolition of the established Clergy? So far from losing any thing, true Religion I apprehend would be a great gainer, and the deserving part of the Clergy no loser. Their congregations would, and ought to support them, so long as they approved of their doctrine and behaviour. Ministers would be more exemplary, when they found they had nothing to depend upon but the esteem and good will of their Congregations, joined to their own activity and diligence. All sects and parties would stand on fair and equal ground; and the word of God would have free course and be greatly glorified.

But in the second place. *Religious establishments are inconsistent with the principles of Christianity:* or the constitution of that church established, set up, and perfected, by our only Lord and Master *the man Christ Jesus*, and his Apostles.

I here throw the gauntlet, and challenge all the

advocates for national establishments to produce me a single passage from the New Testament in favour of them. Arguments formed by analogy from the Jewish constitution have no force here. Christianity goes upon quite different principles from Judaism. The Jewish constitution was a local one, calculated for the conveniency of a particular people, and to serve a great and important purpose in providence. The Christian system is universal, and comprehends and embraces all mankind. *Go and teach all nations &c.** Not only the moral and religious, but the civil and judicial constitution of the Jews was appointed by God. It is not so in the christian Religion. Our Saviour and his Apostles attended the Jewish national church, because it was established by God; and they were circumcised Jews and subject to the Law. But what is that to us Gentile Christians to whom the Law (the moral part of it only excepted,) was never given: and who have nothing to do with carnal ordinances, and the beggarly elements of the Levitical Priesthood. It is our duty to *stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage.†* Prove the lawfulness of your establishments if you can, by express quotations from the New Testament, and your work is done: but do not think to gain your point with men of sense, by childish types and figures, parallels and analogies drawn from the old Testament. || Our blessed Lord and his holy Apostles

* Math. xxviii. 19.

† Gal. v. 1.

|| The following passage from the Old Testament, has been much abused in favour of establishments. Isaiah xlix. 23. *And Kings shall be thy Nursing Fathers, and their Queens thy Nursing Mothers &c.* With respect to it I observe, that if this prophecy respects the gentile christian church at all, it must relate to later periods than any we have yet seen. Hitherto the Kings and Queens of the earth have been very sparing in their attention to the church of Christ. Too many of these potentates I admit, have *nursed* and carefully suckled Antichristian error, superstition and idolatry; and the mischievous brat has thriven not a little by such nourishment.

ties, attended the Jewish national church because it was the *work* of God : but though they were yet on earth, they would not attend your establishments because they are the *creature* of man. Your connection with the civil power, your unchristian articles and confessions would prove an unsurmountable bar to their admission, as they have been to that of some of their best and sincerest followers in every age.

Had our Lord ever intended that his Religion, or its ministers, should be upheld by civil power, he or his Apostles would have given some directions on the subject. *He*, or *they*, in defining the duty of Governors and subjects, would have made it in-

richment. But these potentates have either persecuted, or given very cold encouragement to the true christian church ; the woman who fled into the wilderness. If they have not always like the Dragon thrown a flood after her, they have at least endeavoured to lay a snare in her way by test and corporation acts ; and by keeping obsolete laws unrepealed hanging like a sword over her head.

But it is not my opinion, that the words of Isaiah are applicable to the gentile church at all. They relate to the future glorious conversion and restoration of the Jews ; and are so understood by an ingenious writer whose words I shall here quote. " Whoever reads the words of " this Prophecy, with the least attention, must (I think) be convinced, " that they can relate to nothing else but the future restoration of *Israel*. " For they are not applicable either to the return from *Babylon*, or to " the christian church. Not to the former because they were never so " *straitened for room*, as is here foretold in *ver. 19; 20* Nor did *Kings* " *and Queens ever bow down to them, and lick up the dust off their feet*, according to *ver. 23*. but, on the contrary, rather tyrannized over them. " Nor can they be applied to the christian church ; because this allegorical *Zion* has, as yet, had none of its *waste and desolate places* (or the " land of its destruction) *rendered too narrow by reason of the inhabitants* ; " nor can she be said to be a *captive, removing to and fro*, or to be left " alone. The first seven verses of this chapter do (I grant) speak of the " christian church, as well as of the *Israelites*, particularly in the 6th. " verse.—*It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the* " *tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel : I will also give thee* " *for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the* " *earth, &c.* But the rest of the chapter, or at least from *ver. 13*, to the " end, relate evidently to the restoration of the *Israelites* to their own " land. *Eyre's* observations on the prophecies relating to the restoration of the Jews.

The same writer shews, that the words *Israel, Judah, Jerusalem, Zion, &c.* occurring in Isaiah and other Prophets, have been sometimes grossly misapplied by christian divines, as signifying the gentile church when they relate to the Jews, and their future conversion and glory.

cumbent on the Magistrate in every country where Christianity had gained ground, to give it a legal establishment. But do the New Testament writers ever drop the least hint of this kind? Never, never!

What says our Lord to his Apostles when he sent them forth to preach the Gospel? Does he bid them apply to Tiberius Cæsar, or Pontius Pilate, for an establishment? Math. x. 16. *Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils; and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.* Luke xxii. 25. 26. *And he (Jesus) said unto them, the kings of the Gentiles exercise Lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.* See the parallel places Math. xx. 25. Mark. x. 42. What did our Lord say to Pontius Pilate, when he was interrogated concerning the nature of that authority he claimed? John xviii. 36. *Jesus answered my kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; ; but now is my kingdom not from hence.*

Two Apostles of Christ have touched upon the subject of civil Government. Paul Rom. xiii. 1.—7. and Peter i. Ep. II. 13, 14, 17. They recommend to christians obedience, respect, and due support, to a well-regulated, equitable civil government; and Paul indirectly points out the duty of rulers at the same time. But neither of these Apostles, say a

word from which it can be inferred ; that the *higher powers* were authorized to establish any mode or form of the christian religion : or interfere in the concerns of the church at all. In vain shall we search the records of the New Testament for any thing of this kind. Christians are commanded to love, honour, esteem, and in certain cases maintain, those pastors who are over them in the Lord : either freely chosen by themselves, or appointed by the advice and direction of the Apostles. But they are not commanded, or even permitted, to apply to the higher powers for a legal establishment : or to seek any emoluments or gratifications from them, farther than that common protection and equal encouragement ; which belongs to and is the right of all good citizens and peaceable members of the common wealth without exception.

The three passages above quoted clearly shew, that our great master never thought of his church being aided and assisted by the civil power. He disapproves of the arbitrary maxims of the rulers of this world ; and recommends the contrary to his disciples. He intimates that his people should be exposed to persecution ; and be looked upon with an unfriendly eye by these powers. He declares before Pontius Pilate, that his kingdom was not of this world. Surely then, when the church, or what goes by the name, is connected with the state, forms an *alliance* with it, and is dependent upon Princes and great men for the appointment and support of its ministers ; it forfeits its true and proper character, sinks into an earthly fraternity, and becomes a part of the kingdoms of this world. Here I might rest, as having sufficiently proved my point both from scripture and reason. But a few thoughts yet occur to me, which may tend not a little to il-

illustrate the subject, and give additional force to all that has been advanced upon it.

In the book of Revelation; the last and one of the most precious legacies, that Christ Jesus ever bequeathed to his church, we have a wonderful account of the plan of Providence, or the mystery of God, from the time of John down to the final judgement: described in sublime though often difficult figures. As this mysterious book expressly and indeed chiefly treats of the concerns of the christian church: if it ever had been the intention of Providence, that this church (I mean here the true New Testament church), should have been allied to, interwoven with, and supported by the civil powers of this world, it would I apprehend, have been recorded and prophesied of in this book. But does that prophetic spirit which speaks to the churches, to the churches of every age, ever say so? I am convinced by a perusal of this book that it does not. But though it says nothing of an union of the true church with the state, it speaks plainly of a false corrupt church, a great spiritual whore, a dreadful antichristian apostacy that shall arise, in close connection and harmony with the powers of this world; which shall overwhelm and oppress the true church of God for a series of ages: a time, and times, and half a time; forty-two months; or twelve hundred and sixty prophetic days or years.

This dreadful persecuting power is delineated by different figures and metaphors. The Dragon spoken of Rev. XII, denotes the power of pagan Rome, which persecuted the primitive christians; and has no farther connection with the apostacy, than merely devolving *his power, his seat, and great authority* upon it.* The two fierce and savage Beasts described Rev. XIII. are the proper emblems of the

* Rev. XIII. 2

apostate church, as upheld, protected and cherished by the civil power ; and point at different modifications of antichristian tyranny.

That the civil power shall be connected with the apostate church, and *vice versa*, the apostate church interwoven with, and made a part of the constitution of the governing powers of modern Europe, is plainly prophesied of and declared in Rev. XVII. 12, 13. *And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings which have received no kingdom as yet ; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.* Now nothing can be clearer from the context, than that these ten kings or kingdoms are the dismembered parts of the Roman Empire ; which after it was dissolved and divided by frequent invasions of barbarous nations, grew up into distinct sovereignties, nearly about the time that the power of the Pope, and ecclesiastical tyranny in general was perfected. Great Britain is included in the number of these kingdoms : for it is well known that all England, and the southern part of Scotland also formed a part of the Roman Empire.

Here is plain and pregnant proof, that it is the false corrupt church and not the true ; which shall be associated and incorporated with the civil power. It is never said that any of these ten kings or kingdoms, in any period of their duration, shall establish or cherish the two witnesses, or the woman that was obliged to fly from the Dragon into the wilderness. And this leads me on to another argument. The prophetic spirit in the Revelation not only declares that the beast, that is, the false apostate, commonly called the orthodox church, shall be upheld and strengthened by the Kings or civil powers of modern Europe ; but it also expressly asserts, that these same powers shall oppose, oppress, and afflict the true

church or the saints of the most high, for the space of forty-two months or twelve hundred and sixty years. Rev. XIII. 1,—5 to 9. *And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things, and blasphemies, and power was given unto him to continue (literally, to make war) forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them : and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear.* Rev. XVII. 14. *These (viz. the ten kings beforementioned) shall make war with the Lamb &c.* See also Rev. Chapters XI, and XII throughout, where the true church is characterised by the two witnesses, and the woman who fled into the wilderness, and was nourished there. It may be also proper to read the description of the second beast, and compare it with what is said of the first, Rev. XIII. 11 to the end.

From the proofs here offered I think it may be fairly inferred, that no church or churches in *alliance* with any of the ten kings or kingdoms of modern Europe, during the period of twelve hundred and sixty years, can be the true New Testament church. Whether they altogether (without exception) make up the body of the great whore, or form constituent parts of any of the two savage beasts, is another and very delicate question. That the church of Rome forms a very considerable part

of the Whore of Babylon, or the Beast, I have not the smallest doubt. But I am a little shy, and would be even sorry, to bring down all the Protestant Establishments to her level. There are degrees in guilt as well as in grace : and some of these establishments are surely better than others.

Let us for the present if possible, take the most lenient and candid side of the question. *Mystery Babylon the great*, is said to be Rev. XVII. 5. *the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*. Let us suppose then the church of Rome with the Pope her head, to be this mother of harlots ; and the modern establishments her daughters. It is not unfuitable to the character of a harlot to have progeny.

In some of these daughters we can trace the likeness of the mother strongly, in others more faintly. Some of them have not a little of the fire, impetuosity, selfishness and cruelty of their great ancestor : others are tolerably good humoured. All of them were most dangerous and untractable in their early youth ; and have grown wiser as they grew older. Age and experience has taught them some degree of wisdom. Tho' a Lady in a neighbouring country, is well known yet to be very variable and capricious in her temper. Sometimes she will subside into a perfect calm of indifference ; and at other times she will be seized with a sudden splenetic fit, a paroxysm of fury, exhibit at once all the raging fornication of Babylon, and exclaim confusion and damnation to Dissenters. When she is under this delirium, nothing can reclaim her or bring her to reason, but a little secular chastisement, and the strong hand of civil power ; which her own husband tho' he loves and indulges her too much, finds himself under the necessity of inflicting.

To speak without a figure. I shall say nothing here, of the foreign establishments as that would

lead me too far : but with regard to those of our own country it may be observed, that the church of England exhibits and displays far more of the features, lineaments, and disposition of the Roman Prostitute, than the church of Scotland does. Her Articles, liturgical service, and whole ecclesiastical constitution, are evidently formed upon that model. Henry the eighth, her first *supreme head*, was a real Pope of a civil kind, as furious, bigotted, and intolerant, as the universal Bishop of Rome had been before him. The title of supreme head has been since changed into that of Governor : but a similar power is still claimed tho' more gently exercised. I have already spoken of the Persecutions of Presbyterians and other Dissenters in the arbitrary reigns of Charles the first and second : which it is well known were promoted by the Bishops of the English Church. These Bishops, and all the high church clergy together, have been not a little curbed and restrained since the Revolution, by the prudent regulations of the legislature. The convocation, that conclave of priestly power and priestly tyranny has been almost taken away.

Whatever zeal the high priests of the church of England, may pretend for his present Majesty, it is no secret, that many of them were the professed enemies of his royal Grand Father, and Great Grand Father ; these two worthy Princes George the first and second. And when they found they could no longer procure the assistance of the civil power to aid them in the prosecution of Dissenters, they had recourse to the mob. I speak not here of the late riot at Birmingham, that, and the cause of it, is known to all who have read the public prints ; and I have touched upon it in the Discourse that follows this Essay. But I allude to those tumults in the end of the reign of Queen

Anne, and soon after the accession of George the first. When the rude, ignorant, unchristianized populace, stimulated by the seditious harangues of the Tory high church priesthood, assembled in vast multitudes, and with diabolical fury pulled down the Meeting houses of Presbyterians and other Dissenters in London, and various parts of England. These insurrections were so frequently renewed and occasioned such wide-spreading devastation, that the Government found it necessary to interpose : and make express Laws in order to check such infernal proceedings. The famous Mob-Act owed its origin to these tumults, for which we may thank the clergy.

About this time some spirited writers appeared in favour of religious liberty ; who attacked with invincible force of argument and manly eloquence the absurd claims of high-Church ; and rendered the Priests odious and contemptible to the thinking part of the nation. Among these, the authors of the Independent Whig made a distinguished figure. This periodical paper was the joint production of the Wit of England and Scotland. Trenchard and Gordon were its principal authors. Any body who would wish to see these persecuting priests properly exposed, and handled as they deserve, may read this book. There is a copy of it to be found in the public library of Montrose, which some years ago I had the honour of presenting. I thought it necessary to touch a little upon these matters : for I have not yet forgot the cry of *high church and Sacheverel for ever*, tho' some are now willing to forget it.

I have little more to say in regard to the church of Scotland than I have said already. I have a tenderness and even a sympathy for her ; and would be glad if I could with truth strike her out of the antichristian list altogether. Not to say more about

the solemn league and covenant, which I charitably hope she has sincerely renounced and is now ashamed of: her works even in later periods have not been perfect before God. Witness the animated opposition she made in Parliament in the reign of Queen Anne, to the toleration of episcopal Dissenters in Scotland. Witness also the turbulent disposition of many of her synods, when it was proposed to grant the Roman Catholics the liberty of public worship. Witness the horrid unchristian mob at Edinburgh, when the Catholic chapel was burnt, and the house, library and furniture of its Bishop destroyed.* These are sad blemishes and favour much of the Babylonian spirit. But in mitigation of this charge it ought to be mentioned, that several of her ministers were on the side of toleration, spoke and wrote in favour of it; and testified their disapprobation of the temper of the majority.

How long the present modern establishments in Europe may continue, it is not easy to say. But it is probable, that when Great Babylon comes in remembrance before God, (Rev. xvi. 19.) those churches who either form a part of her, or copy after her example will not be of long continuance. As in Paris lately there was one large Bastille and a great many smaller state-prisons: so in Christendom there is one great Babylon and several of inferior note. And as in Paris when the great Bastille was demolished the smaller state prisons were removed: so

*In Summer 1779 the General Assembly of the church of Scotland published a Declaration; in which after expressing "their attachment to the principles of civil and religious Liberty, and their earnest desire that universal toleration, and liberty of conscience, may be extended to Protestants of every denomination"; they display the same narrow sentiments against the toleration of Papists, as the Synods above mentioned had done before them. If the latter part of their Declaration deserves blame, the former surely merits praise.

in Christendom when Babylon the great falls, the spiritual dungeons of subscription and human authority will probably fall also.* That I may not pass for a fool or an enthusiast in what I have advanced, I will here gladly take shelter under the wing of that great philosopher, respectable writer, and good christian Dr. *Hartley*; who wrote upwards of forty years ago, and wonderful to tell was a member of the church of England. After making some observations on the probability that all the present civil Governments will be overturned, Dr. *Hartley* has the following passage.

“ Prop. 82. *It is probable, that the present forms*
 “ *of Church government will be dissolved.* This
 “ proposition follows from the foregoing. The
 “ civil and ecclesiastical powers are so interwoven
 “ and cemented together, in all the countries of
 “ *Christendom*, that if the first fall, the last must fall
 “ also. But there are many Prophecies which de-

* The mention of the Bastille recalls to my memory the late glorious Revolution in France; in favour and approbation of which I am happy to bear a public and sincere testimony. I call it a glorious Revolution, because its principles are founded on the Rights of Man, the natural equality of human nature; and calculated to promote peace and universal happiness. Gallant Nation! May ye never fall a prey to intestine commotion or foreign invasion. If the despotic Kings of the earth will not permit you to enjoy in peace the fruits of that fair and equal system of Liberty ye have erected: if they will needs unreasonably intermeddle in your affairs, and attempt to reduce you to that state of slavery from which ye have nobly emancipated yourselves: may shame, confusion and disgrace attend their base hostile designs. May ye go forth against them in the strength of God the Lord. May the Angel of the Lord encamp with your armies, cover the heads of your generous sons in the day of battle, and flash destruction in the faces of your enemies. But if Providence has otherwise appointed, if you must fall; and French Liberty like Marcellus in Virgil shall be only shewn to the world and then disappear, I submit to the mysterious councils of heaven. My opinion however of the rectitude of your measures will not be changed. The brave, the good, the virtuous, are often exposed to misfortunes in this world. Let tyrants call you rebels and traitors, I shall always esteem you as heroes and Patriots. I shall consecrate your ashes. Each revolving fourteenth of July will be a fast day to me, and I shall fill a temperate glass to your honoured memories, and mingle tears with it.

“ clare the fall of the Ecclesiastical powers of the
 “ christian world. And though each church seems
 “ to flatter itself with the hopes of being exempted;
 “ yet it is very plain, that the prophetic characters
 “ belong to them all. They have all left the
 “ true, pure, simple Religion; and teach for doc-
 “ trines the commandments of men. They are all
 “ merchants of the earth, and have set up a king-
 “ dom of this world, abounding in riches, tempor-
 “ al power, and external pomp. They have all
 “ a dogmatizing spirit, and persecute such as do
 “ not receive their own mark, and worship the
 “ image which they have set up. They all neglect
 “ Christs command of preaching the gospel to all
 “ nations, and even that of going to *the lost sheep*
 “ *of the house of Israel*, there being innumerable
 “ multitudes in all christian countries, who have
 “ never been taught to read, and who are, in other
 “ respects also, destitute of the means of saving
 “ knowledge. It is very true that the church of
 “ *Rome is Babylon the great, and the mother of har-*
 “ *lots, and of the abominations of the earth.* But
 “ all the rest have copied her example, more or
 “ less. They have all received money, like *Gebazi*;
 “ and therefore the leprosy of *Naaman* will cleave
 “ to them, and to their seed for ever. And this
 “ impurity may be considered not only as justifying
 “ the application of the prophecies to all the chris-
 “ tian churches, but as a natural cause for their
 “ downfall. The corrupt Governors of the several
 “ churches will ever oppose the true Gospel, and
 “ in so doing will bring ruin upon themselves. The
 “ destruction of the temple at *Jerusalem*, and of the
 “ hierarchy of the *Jews*, may likewise be con-
 “ sidered as a type and presage of the destruction
 “ of that *Judaical* form of rites, ceremonies, and

“ human ordinances, which takes place, more or less, in all christian countries.” *

Some things that follow in Dr. Hartley, I by no means approve of, particularly where he says, “ it follows from these considerations, that good men ought to submit to the ecclesiastical *powers that be* for conscience sake, as well as to the civil ones. They are both from God as far as respects inferiors.” But if these ecclesiastical powers are as bad as *he* represents them, and I believe them to be, and also probably devoted to destruction, they cannot be from God in a good sense. It is therefore high time for every good man that thinks of them as Dr. Hartley did, and I do, to flee out of them as Lot did from Sodom, when he was apprized of its approaching overthrow. It can never be the duty of a good man to submit to “ merchants of the earth, a kingdom of this world,” to those who are infected with the “ incurable leprosy of *Gebazi*,” and where “ the corrupt Governors of the several churches will ever oppose the true Gospel.” Dr. Hartley by these and other expressions, has pronounced their condemnation, and supplied Dissenters with the best reasons in the world for opposing establishments. It is true the good man afterwards qualifies the submission he recommends, by adding, “ providing disobedience to God be not enjoined, which is seldom the case” But surely disobedience to God must be enjoined, or implied, where “ the true Gospel” is “ opposed,” and will be “ ever opposed.” But without being at the trouble to confute farther, what needs no confutation, let us enquire what conduct the prophetic voice from heaven recommends to Christians, with respect

* *Hartley's observations on Man &c.* Vol. 2d, p. 370. London, 1749.

to corruptions in mystical Babylon. Rev. XVIII.

4. *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins ; and that ye receive not of her plagues.*

This is decisive, and comes in the place of a thousand arguments. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.* Those who will not hearken to this prophetic voice, or do not conceive it to be addressed to them, will never listen to me ; and I shall say no more on the subject.

When I condemn establishments so much, I would not be understood as intending to throw out the least reflection, upon the private characters of any who are members of them. I meddle not with individuals : it is bodies politic and ecclesiastical constitutions that I have in view. I acknowledge with pleasure, and am truly thankful, that there have been, and are, many excellent persons, good citizens, and learned divines in all establishments : not excepting the church of England, and the church of Rome. I am sensible of all the real merit of a *Tillotson*, *Burnet*, *Clark*, *Hoadley*, &c. in the former : and of a *Pascal*, *Fenelon*, *Simon*, *Calmet*, with others in the latter. I write from the fulness and sincerity of my heart ; and I have no intention to give any body unnecessary offence. If there are any weak or wicked enough to think or say, that I ought to be called to account for what I have written, I shall tell them in reply ; that they understand not the rights of man, or the genius of Christianity ; and know not what spirit they are of.

I wish no evil to any person : but on the contrary, the highest good to the whole family of Adam, the universal community of Mankind. And in particular, *my hearts desire and prayer to God, for all*

that *name* the blessed *name of Christ*, however corruptly and imperfectly, is, that they may be enlightened, accepted, and finally *saved*.

N. B. The following discourses are a specimen of many that the author has composed from the Revelation, and other places of scripture, in defence of our common Christianity. Whether any more of these Discourses shall see the light depends on circumstances.

T W O

DISCOURSES

DELIVERED TO A SMALL BODY OF
CHRISTIANS AT *MONTROSE*;

ON THE 31st. OF JULY AND 21st. OF AUGUST LAST:

BEING A COMMENT ON

REVELATION XIV.

Rev. III. 5, 11. *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, for I will confess his name before my Father, and before his Angels.— Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*



TO
THOMAS FYSHE PALMER,
PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL
IN THE
UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF DUNDEE.

DEAR SIR,

I APPREHEND no apology is necessary, that I give you none of these clerical appellations; which are often incentives to vanity, and are at best but a poor encomium on real desert. I know you despise them as much as I do, who can lay no claim to them. Every man is the artificer of his own merit: and where true merit exists, it cannot be raised or amplified in the judgement of men of sense by an empty title.

My esteem for you is not founded upon birth, fortune, or academical distinction. You might have possessed all these in the most eminent degree, without in the least attracting my observation or engag-

ing my affection. It is your abandoning those flattering prospects that lay before you, your open and fearless assent to truth ;—poor unbefriended truth, that has given you a place in my heart, and prompts me this day to make public mention of your name.

Viewing you in the light of a devout worshipper of Jehovah the only true God, a steady assertor of his proper Unity, and as a sincere believer in the divine mission and resurrection of Christ, I present you with these discourses.

Concerning points less momentous, you and I may have had, and still may have, our differences of opinion ; which may afford room for the exercise of mutual candour and charity. That the Divine Being may lead each of us into the knowledge of all necessary truth, and preserve us from hurtful error, is the sincere wish and prayer of

DEAR SIR,

YOUR FRIEND, AND FELLOW-LABOURER,

IN THE GOSPEL OF JESUS,

WILLIAM CHRISTIE.

MONTROSE 9th. October 1791.

DISCOURSE I.

REV. XIV. I——8

And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins: these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth: these were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God. And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying, with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgement is come: and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the foun-

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tains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Christian Brethren,

IN the preceding chapter, we had before us a dreadful description and prospect of that Antichristian Tyranny which should so long oppress the church, exhibited to us under the figure of two wild and savage beasts. The verses we have just now read, present us with a beautiful contrast to that horrid and disagreeable scene. Here, we have a comfortable and encouraging vision of the faithful disciples of Christ; who have surmounted all the temptations and corruptions of the world, and are accounted worthy to stand before the Son of Man.

Ver. 1. And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

By the Lamb standing on Mount Sion, we are to understand our Lord Jesus Christ; before called a Lamb in this prophecy on account of his innocence and virtue, and whom John the author of it, in his Gospel, introduces the Baptist as styling, *the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.*† The one hundred forty and four thousand who attend upon the Lamb, are the whole body of true and sincere christians: the redeemed company; who by the purity of their faith, the sanctity of their morals, and their exemplary character, are eminently distinguished from an unbelieving, a vain, and corrupt world. That happy company follow the

† John I. 29.

Lamb wheresoever he goeth, keep close by him, and count it their greatest glory to belong to him.

We are not to imagine from the number one hundred forty and four thousand here used, that the redeemed company is limited to it, and cannot exceed it. The number 144 is symbolical, and is raised from the root 12 multiplied into itself; in allusion as is thought to the twelve Apostles or heads of the christian church, and the twelve Patriarchs or tribes of Israel. This Society are said according to our translation, to have *his Father's name* (viz. the Father of Christ or the Lamb,) *written in their foreheads*. It is here proper to take notice of a various reading. The *Alexandrine* Manuscript, with near twenty more, the *Vulgate*, *Syriac*, and other ancient versions, with some *Fathers*, read in this place, *having his name, and his Father's name, written in their foreheads*; that is, the name of the Lamb or Christ, and the Father also.† I am inclined to think that this last reading is the true one. It has great authority from Manuscripts, versions, and Fathers to support it, and is approved besides by several very learned men. The sense is indeed nearly the same either way, but the last is more eminently descriptive of Christians, whose great creed is to believe in *one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*.§ By this inscription and designation, they are distinguished and discriminated from the followers of the beast, who receive their religion from man; whereas the true and intrepid christian acknowledges no authority in religion but God and Christ: God the supreme author, and Christ the revealer and messenger.

The beauty of this inscription, which tho' figura-

† *Wetstein* in loco

§ 1 Tim. II. 5.

tive in itself denotes what is real and substantial, cannot be clearly understood without comparing it with the mark of the beast mentioned in the preceding chapter, to which it is contrasted ; and which we had under consideration on a former occasion. We then observed among other things, that the mark of the beast signified, a submission to human decrees in matters of religion ; tamely giving up the the judgement of our own minds, and acquiescing in a Religion manufactured to our hands by a *state* or a *church* without proper enquiry or examination : or contrary to the light of our own understandings, and the impartial verdict of our consciences.

Those who have the sacred *stamp* of Christ and his Father upon them, will act suitably to such an exalted character. Their conduct will be materially and essentially different from the mere children of this world, whose part and portion is only in this present life. They will be strangers to cunning, to deceit, and prevarication, in every transaction ; more especially in what regards Religion. They will never stand in awe of man whose breath is in his nostrils ; but will give a free and full assent to truth, — sacred and unalterable truth, even in the lowest possible external circumstances. Having the seal of God and Christ upon them, they will pay no regard to *man's Divinity* ; or to that impious rant of creeds, confessions, and articles, that clerical imposture has framed, and civil authority in ages of ignorance and darkness has sanctioned. A Pope, a Bishop, a Priest, a King, and a Parliament, are all the same to them ; when acting in a capacity they have no right to act in. They disavow them all as religious guides and governors, and bow only to the authority of God, as manifested and declared by our Lord Jesus Christ. And here give me leave to introduce an anecdote, which does great honour to

a worthy Gentleman long since deceased. Soon after that Revolution which has been so often styled glorious, a motion was made and passed in parliament against a certain body of Christians, which reflects everlasting disgrace on those who passed it. The Gentleman before mentioned who was a member of the house of Commons, after opposing it observed, that tho' he would pay all due respect and allegiance to a parliamentary King, he would have nothing to do with a parliamentary God or a parliamentary Religion. Nothing could be better expressed, or more to the purpose. But we proceed.

Ver. 2. and 3. *And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song, but the hundred forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.*

“ The plan of these prophecies, often introduces
 “ the church in heaven as a chorus, with great propriety and elegance, as a noble and moving part
 “ of the drama.” They are here described, “with
 “ voices strong as the roaring of the sea, and loud
 “ as thunder, but musical and harmonious, as if a
 “ great number of voices were joined in full concert, with symphonies of musical instruments as
 “ in the solemn worship of the temple. They are
 “ engaged in a solemn act of worship before the
 “ throne of God, his most immediate presence, in
 “ company with those living creatures which represented the Angels of God, and with the four and
 “ twenty elders, who signified the Patriarchs and
 “ Apostles, as representatives of the Jewish and
 “ Christian churches now united into one. The
 “ Psalm of praise they sung was of a new compo-

“ fition ; the full knowledge and understanding of
 “ which was peculiar to those persons who had been
 “ truly consecrated to God, and had been delivered
 “ from the corruptions so generally prevailing in
 “ the world.”§

There is something my Brethren, in the joys of Religion, that the slaves of sensuality and pleasure can neither comprehend nor relish. Their enervated minds are so petrified with the love of this world, so debased by an attachment to carnal sensations, that they cannot enter into, or elevate themselves to the sublimity of devotion.

Ver. 4. *These are they which were not defiled with women ; for they are virgins : these are they which follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth : these were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.*

There is no manner of doubt, but the exemplary persons here described, will study to keep themselves free from carnal pollutions of every kind : but I apprehend that is not the proper meaning of the expressions used in the first clause of this verse. Idolatrous corruptions of Religion, are in the style of scripture, and agreeably to the phraseology of the Old Testament and the new, called fornication and adultery. Thus the people of Israel and Judah of old, when they left the true God for the worship of Idols, are said to commit whoredom. And in this book of Revelation, the figures of which are founded upon, and in a great part borrowed from the old Testament ; the apostate idolatrous church is styled the *great whore*, yea the *mother of harlots*, and those who keep company with her, are said to commit spiritual fornication. This is an easy and very beautiful figure ; for as the true church is a chaste virgin espoused to Christ, so when her mem-

bers break loose from her, and join themselves to the false and corrupt religions of this world, they may be said to play the harlot, and to commit fornication, or adultery, against their true and only proper husband. This spiritual fornication is of the most dangerous and destructive kind; and should be studiously avoided by all those who wish to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The excellent persons here described, are said with beautiful simplicity of expression to *follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth*. They delight in him; they love him with pure untainted love. Where he is they resolve to be also. They take him for better and for worse, and count his service perfect freedom. The thought of a divorce, or an act of Infidelity, would fill them with uneasiness, grief, and horror. “ As the first
“ born and first fruits under the Law, were holy
“ and consecrated to God, so were these persons
“ redeemed from the rest of mankind, freed from
“ the antichristian corruptions of the church, to
“ serve God according to the truth of the christian
“ religion, faith, and worship.”†

Ver. 5. *And in their mouth was found no guile : for they are without fault before the throne of God.*

How different, as we have often had occasion to observe, are the maxims of Christianity from the maxims of the world. The world is too frequently a commerce of falsehood. Mutually deceiving and being deceived. How much treachery and dissimulation, how much guile and malice, do we find in our general intercourse with mankind. Some can tell lies on any occasion without feeling or remorse. Others are more subtle and refined, and have recourse to various finesses, which tho’ not so gross in themselves, are real breaches of sacred and invio-

† *Lowman's Paraphrase* p. 217.

lably truth. But the company of true and faithful christians are quite of an opposite cast. In their mouth is found no guile. They will not deceive any man, nor impose upon him. Simple in their manners, they are strangers to fraud and cunning, and speak the truth from their hearts. And if they are so in the ordinary concerns of life, they endeavour if possible to be still more strict in the important concerns of Religion. Their religion is the religion of the heart, enlightened by the understanding. Equally remote from the grimace of hypocrisy, and the gloom of superstition, they wish to offer unto God the incense of a pure and holy mind, and to be without fault before his throne. Human imperfection, weaknesses, and infirmities will no doubt cleave unto them : but they are their burden, they desire to throw them off, and struggle to get free. And if they cannot be so perfect as they wish to be, they at least do not allow themselves in the practice of any wilful deliberate sin.

Ver. 6. and 7. *And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgement is come : and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*

We have here Brethren, an animating motive to constancy and perseverance in true religion. The Gospel we believe, and we preach, is an *everlasting Gospel* : tho' it has hitherto been kept down by Persecution, and destroyed still more by corruption. Yet in the end it will recover itself, and resume all its primitive lustre. Upheld by divine Providence, the gates of hell, and the terrors of death, shall not prevail against it. It will rise again on the wings of

Fame, elevate itself anew, and extend its triumphs to them that dwell on the earth, to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. Do you ask what the substance of this Gospel is, when it shall be preached in its original purity? I will repeat it again in the words of an Angel. *Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his Judgement is come: and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.* This my christian, unitarian friends, is the fundamental article of the Gospel, declared by an Angelic testimony. || Here let us rest as upon an impenetrable rock, that cannot be assaulted but at the peril of those that do it. When the tempest roars, the winds blow, and the waters are ready to overflow, here we have solid footing; a mansion ready to receive us that is not built upon sand. Compared with this foundation, what are all the fabricks of superstition, that priestcraft has invented or sophistry has reared? What but refuges of lies, cobwebs of a moment, bubbles that are ready to break; and must at last give way before the force of all prevailing truth! And this brings me to the following,

Ver. 8. *And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.*

In close connection with the triumph and final victory of true Religion, or the everlasting Gospel, stands the fall of Babylon:—*Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.* † *Delenda est Carthago.* If Babylon does

|| When I call this, the substance, or fundamental article of the Gospel, as it most certainly is, I do not mean to exclude any other, that properly belongs to the system.

† Rev. XVII. 5.

not fall, the Kingdom of Christ cannot come in its full extent : nor *the everlasting Gospel be preached to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people*. Truth and error are incompatible : the seed of the serpent must be destroyed, before the seed of the woman can flourish. In vain are all compromises, all commutations, all partial and temporary meliorations, and reformation. While the corrupted and poisoned fountain remains, the streams can neither be made sweet nor salutary. We have it upon the word of an Angel that Babylon shall *fall*, and therefore we may trust the execution of this promise with God, rejoice in the expectation of it as we are called upon to do ; and in the mean time possess our souls in patience, and commit them as unto the keeping of a faithful creator.

There is a reason and a good reason too, here assigned, for the overthrow of Babylon : and that is, *because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication*. She has presented her intoxicating cup to all nations within the pale of the Roman Empire, and they have all drunk with avidity the delicious tho' poisoned draught. And the effect of the cup has been correspondent to the horrid ingredients of which it is composed. It has deprived the nations of their sober senses, and made them mad and delirious. Surely then, a power that has occasioned so much complicated mischief, and such a dreadful train of evils, merits destruction. And may God accomplish it in his own good time and way.

As all nations are said to have drunk of *the wine of the wrath of Babylon*, we ought not to be surprised if we should happen to see some of the effects of this *wrathful wine*, even in our own country. Does any body enquire the cause of the late dreadful riot

in the southern part of this kingdom ; at which all good men have been so much shocked and alarmed ? I believe, I may now without breach of candour or charity reply, that it was *the wrath of the wine of Babylon*. The cup was charged and filled to the brim by the priests, and others ; and the poor deluded people drank it till they became furious, and undiscerning ; and mistook their best friends for their enemies*. As in former times, it was *the wine of the wrath of Babylon*, that raised the *Crusades*, that massacred the *Waldenses* and *Albigenses*, that persecuted the *Lollards*, that brought *Servetus* to the stake, that drove the *Unitarians* out of Poland, the *Protestants* out of France, and sent the *Puritans* in the last century to America : so it is this *wrathful wine*, that destroyed the *habitations* of so many deserving persons lately at Birmingham ; and consumed the *house, apparatus, library* and *Manuscripts* of one of the greatest philosophers, and most distinguished writers of the age. A scene that will ever stain the ecclesiastical annals of England. From *such wine* and such practices, Good Lord, deliver us and our Country. *Amen*.

* To support what I have advanced above, it may be proper here to quote a passage from Dr. *Priestley's*, excellent, humane, and truly christian Address to the people of Birmingham. " By the discourses of your teachers, and the exclamations of your superiors in general, drinking confusion and damnation to us, (which is well known to have been their frequent practice) your bigotry has been excited to the highest pitch, and nothing having been said to you to moderate your passions, but every thing to inflame them ; hence without any consideration on your part, or on theirs, who ought to have known and taught you better—you were prepared for every species of outrage ; thinking that whatever you could do to spite and injure us, was for the support of the Government, and especially the church. In destroying us you have been led to think, *you did God* and your Country the most substantial service." Dr. Priestley's assertions, are confirmed by the silence of his adversaries, by the cry of the mob ;—*The King and the Church, down with the Dissenters, damn the Presbyterians &c.* and by other circumstances.

DISCOURSE II.

REV. XIV. 9. TO THE END.

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. And I looked, and, behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat, like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap:

for the time is come for thee to reap ; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth ; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire ; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth ; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horse-bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

IN the former verses of this chapter we have a tender and affecting account of the true christian church, the followers and attendants of the Lamb on Mount Sion, who are so eminently distinguished from the votaries and partizans of the Beast, by the purity of their hearts and lives, as well as by the characteristical stamp and impression of Christ and his heavenly Father. We have also a delightful and transporting account of the future universal progress and propagation of the Gospel, authenticated by an Angel of light ; with an awful and most alarming prophecy of the dismal fall of Babylon the Great, confirmed and made absolutely certain by another Angelic testimony. Both these events are connected together and mutually depend upon one another. The gradual yet constantly increasing progress of the Gospel, with the light of reason and true philosophy, will weaken, sap, and undermine the foundations of Babylon, the kingdom of darkness and

ignorance : and on the other hand the final overthrow of Babylon, by giving such strong irrefragable confirmation of the certainty of ancient prophecy, and by removing every impediment out of the way of truth, will spread the Gospel with accelerated rapidity through every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. Happy period, *thrice* happy indeed when it shall arrive. A consummation devoutly to be wished for. When *they shall beat their swords into plough shares, and their spears into pruning hooks ; when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.** When *they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain.†* When *the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever :‡* and a scene of universal love, harmony, and joy shall take place. This *scene* will be so very different from what the world ever yet saw, that to many it may look like Romance. And some may think I am preaching Romance immediately. But I can assure them from the sure word of prophecy that I am not : and that the scene I have been describing will most certainly take place at the glorious *Millennium* ; and may be in a lower degree sometime before it. Hitherto we have seen little in this world before or after Christianity made its appearance ; but controversy, rancour, war, and desolation. Christ at his first coming prophetically declared, that *he came not to send peace on earth, but a sword ; ||* and the history of the church has verified his declaration. But shall this disorderly state of things ever go on. Shall the great, the merciful Creator, be ever dishonoured by the actions of his rational creatures. Shall the purposes of Jesus the benevolent Saviour be never accomplished. Did

* Is. ii. 4. Micah iv. 3. † Is. XI. 9. LXV. 25. ‡ Rev. XI. 15. § Math. X. 34.

not angels from heaven proclaim at the birth of Christ, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.*† But how little of this glory, this peace, this Good will, have we yet seen. Instead of *Glory*, we have often seen and read in history of deeds transacted by churchmen and professed christians themselves, that are disgraceful to humanity : instead of *peace* ;—lawless violence, and war, and these sometimes too on account of religion : and instead of *Good Will* ;—Antipathy and Persecution. Should these deeds of darkness ever continue among Christians, the Gospel would fail of its principal effect ; the Glory of God and the good of mankind would not be eminently promoted by it ; and consequently it could not be supposed to have a divine original. But blessed be God my Brethren, we are assured that all these things, tho' they may have a time, will have an end, and issue in final, ultimate happiness ; and that a glorious state of things will ensue even in this world ; which will wipe off and cancel the memory of ages of iniquity, ignorance, and disgrace. Who could have thought twenty years ago, that the Revolutions of America or France, could have happened in so short a time. If any body could have predicted them, he would not have been believed. But I will venture to affirm, that these Revolutions great and splendid as they are surely, are but a specimen, a small foretaste, of the more perfect state of things that is to follow upon the fall of Babylon the great.

But here I am sorry to say, that tho' the increase and pleasing progress of the Gospel, with reason and sound Philosophy, which are always the inseparable companions of truth, may do a great deal towards accomplishing the ruin of the antichristian

† Luke II. 14.

empire, or the *kingdom of the beast* ; yet they will not be able to give him his last, final, and deadly wound. From some passages in the close of this chapter, as well as from some following places in the Revelation, I am led to conclude, that before the *monster* falls, he will kick, foam, and make a struggle : that he will collect together from different quarters all the Imps of Satan, all the Sons of darkness under his influence, and make one fierce effort to overwhelm the followers of the Lamb, of reason and truth. But in the end he will be overcome, and fall with treble vengeance, in consequence of this dreadful but ineffectual effort to support himself. And when he falls, all the supporters of Antichristian Tyranny, all the Sons of Belial will fall with him, and be buried in one common mass of ruin and oblivion.

I now proceed to make some brief remarks on the verses we have read.

Verfes 9, 10, 11. *And the third Angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast, and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation : and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy Angels, and in the presence of the Lamb : and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever : and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast, and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.*

There is something inexpressibly dreadful in the punishment here allotted, to those who worship the beast and his image, and receive the mark of his name. My heart aches at the thought of it, and I could wish to omit treating farther of this passage at

all. But I do not know that I am warranted, in commenting upon the divine word of prophecy, to pass by any passage that naturally falls in my way, especially when it is considered, that these words are introduced to us as coming from an Angel as well as the foregoing; and therefore ought to bespeak our most serious attention. You see here my brethren, it is not a light matter to give up the judgement of Reason and Conscience enlightened by the word of God, and basely submit to usurped, human authority in matters of Religion: for this I conceive to be the meaning of worshipping the beast and receiving his mark, as I have before explained it. By whatever antiquity this authority may be recommended, with whatever venerable names adorned, and let it be supported by ever so many states, established churches, and countless multitudes, it is still usurped, human authority: and therefore ought to be resisted by every one who has, or wishes to preserve the sacred stamp of God and Christ. Many ill-instructed, prejudiced, and uninformed persons wear the mark we are speaking of ignorantly, and in some degree innocently, therefore it may be hoped through the tender mercy of that God who knoweth our frame, that they will be forgiven. At least I ardently wish it may be so.

But what shall I say of you, ye perverters of true religion, ye corrupt Governors of erroneous and idolatrous churches, ye cruel and persecuting Priests; who from base and low motives of secular policy, concur in supporting falsehood, opposing truth, and all Reformation; and in oppressing righteous, upright and holy men? What apology can be offered for you, who are *the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is your belly, whose glory is in your shame, and who mind earthly*

things?† How will you hold up your heads, when the false doctrines ye have been the means of continuing, the misery ye have occasioned, the persecution ye have excited, and the innocent blood ye have shed, shall rise up in judgement against you, and cover you with shame, horror, and remorse? The favour of Princes, and the countenance of Statesmen, will then stand you in no stead, against the wrath of incensed omnipotence. You go at present apparelled in long robes, you sit in lordly seats, but then ye shall be divested of these extrinsic ornaments, and the shame of your nakedness will appear. Repent, and avert in time these threatening judgements, and save yourselves and them that hear you. I turn with pleasure from so lamentable a scene, and relieve myself by quoting the next verse.

Ver. 12. *Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*

The singular excellence and patience of the saints consists in this, that tho' they share all the ordinary troubles of life in common with other men, and are besides from their firm adherence to truth and open avowal of it, exposed to peculiar dangers and hardships from antichristian tyrants and oppressors: yet they never make shipwreck of faith or a good conscience: never yield to or comply with the prevailing errors and apostacies of their times. *They keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.* The divine precepts both with regard to worship and practice they preserve inviolated, and they bear a complete uniform testimony to the faith of Jesus, *the faith once delivered to the Saints*, in times even of the greatest distress.

and persecution. Never will they leave the small and often despised society of the faithful to join the unbelieving multitude: but will rather chuse *to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season.*

Ver. 13. *And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, unto me, write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

There is something peculiarly affecting, pathetic, and melting in these divine words. I have often been forcibly struck with them, and felt an impression that I know not how to describe. They might well be enlarged upon and made the subject of a particular discourse: but I can only touch upon them at present in a transient manner. They may be applicable to all pious persons who die in the faith of Jesus: but have I apprehend a more close connection with the case of those, who have encountered persecution, and come through great tribulation with integrity unimpeachable. Blessed undoubtedly are all good men, all believers in Christ: but those whose stubborn virtue hath stood the test of fiery trials, who have been exercised and harrowed by uncommon calamities, are more eminently so. Let them take comfort from these words. The toils they have undergone, the persecutions they have endured, their indefatigable exertions in the cause of truth and righteousness, the generous ardour they have kindled in the breasts of others, *these works of faith and labours of love*, shall by no means lose their reward. Little as they may be regarded by an ungrateful world, they are written in heaven, and recorded in the register of the son of man. These distinguished christians

shall at the time appointed by God, rest from their various and useful labours and their works shall follow them : follow them in death, and rise with them again at the resurrection of the just, be honourably mentioned and applauded by the great Judge ; and rewarded with a crown of glory which fadeth not away. May our part and portion be with such my brethren. *The memory of the just is blest ; and the latter end of holy men, is peace and assuredness for ever. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace. Come of us what will in this transitory world, let our death be the death of the righteous, and our last end like his.*

Ver. 14. to the end. *And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat, like unto the son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another Angel came out of the temple, crying, with a loud voice, to him that sat on the cloud, thrust in thy sickle, and reap ; for the time is come for thee to reap ; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud, thrust in his sickle on the earth ; and the earth was reaped. And another Angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another Angel came out from the Altar, which had power over fire ; and cried with a loud voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth ; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horse-brid-*

les, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

Behold here my brethren, under a most noble and emphatical figure, the destruction of Antichrist, and all the corrupters of true Religion. Long have they laboured in the Vineyard of iniquity, and raised a plentiful tho' dreadful crop of fraud, falsehood and imposture. But the grapes of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorrah are now fully ripe, and the great husbandman is ready to put in his sickle. Long has the divine patience and forbearance been abused, long have the saints of the most high been oppressed: but the time of just retribution is now fully come; and the vials of divine wrath are ready to be poured out. The Son of Man the Lord of this harvest, is represented as making his appearance on a white cloud, and his head adorned with a golden crown; and is now to receive the awful mandate for the destruction of his enemies; who would not have him to reign over them. He carries in his hand a sharp sickle, and is urged by a heavenly messenger to employ it in the long expected but now fully ripened harvest. He puts in his sickle, *and the earth is reaped*: the enemies of God and true religion fall before him, as the tender stalks of corn or the vine before the mowers scythe. He *sweeps them with the besom of destruction*; and is joined by an angelic auxiliary expressly commissioned to the same employment.

He collects the whole corrupt mass together, and throws it into the great *wine press of the wrath of God without the city*: where the adversaries of truth meet with that exemplary punishment, which their enormous crimes and cruelties have so justly merited.

There is every reason to think, that the awful and important event here described is still future : for nothing has yet happened in the history of the church that can properly apply to it. The ecclesiastical harvest has never yet been reaped ; nor the axe laid to the root of the tree. Priestcraft and spiritual usurpation still flourishes, the people of God are oppressed, and the sacred rights of conscience, with religious liberty in its full extent, have never yet been fully and unequivocally acknowledged in any country, America excepted.

The reformation from Popery, tho' attended with signal advantages, was partial and incomplete, and only liberated some countries, while Popery continued to exist in all its rigour in the rest. And the reformed establishments themselves, have either more or less acted the Tragi-Comedy of Popery over again. None of the religious wars that have taken place in Europe can apply to this harvest : or correspond to the strength of metaphor here used ; or the period of prophecy in which this vision occurs. It is therefore future, and will most certainly take place in due time, tho' probably yet at some considerable distance.

This vision appears to me to be connected with the fall of Babylon, mentioned Ver. 8, and therefore is properly referred to that Catastrophe.

In some following chapters of the Revelation we have a more full, distinct, and literal account, of what is only here figuratively described.

From what has been said my good friends, let us take warning, be upon our guard, and make religion the subject of our most attentive consideration. Let all our enquiries after truth be seriously and impartially conducted. While we justly and reasonably resist usurped authority, and refuse to assent

to human systems of divinity, let us take care that we do not follow errors of our own or others making, and be not wise in our own conceits. Let our religious opinions be extracted from the word of God rationally and consistently interpreted, and adorned with a suitable holy practice, that when the son of man comes with his irresistible sickle, he may not cut us down as useless, unprofitable, and criminal labourers in his Vineyard. We must give an account how we have enquired, how we have heard, believed, and acted. Let all these duties therefore be performed in such a candid unbiaſſed manner, as that we may give our account with joy and not with grief. Brethren, *I commend you and myself to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build us up, and give us an inheritance among them which are sanctified.*

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